DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 363 062 EC 302 519

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TITLE Helping People with Autism Manage Their Behavior. Fourth Edition.
INSTITUTION Indiana Univ., Bloomington. Indiana Resource Center for Autism.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 45p.; For the 1983 version, "Helping Children with Autism Manage Their Behavior," see ED 250 890.
AVAILABLE FROM Indiana Resource Center for Autism, Indiana University, 2853 E. Tenth St., Bloomington, IN 47408-2601 ($5).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Autism; Behavioral Objectives; *Behavior Change; Behavior Modification; Educational Philosophy; Educational Practices; Evaluation Methods; *Intervention; Long Range Planning; Positive Reinforcement; Program Development; *Self Management; *Training Methods
IDENTIFIERS Behavior Management

ABSTRACT

This source book focuses on helping people with autism manage their behavior by analyzing the learning environment and the purpose of the behavior and then teaching new skills and behaviors. Introductory material covers the approach's philosophy and the importance of a longitudinal program plan. A section on creating a physical environment for learning looks at objectives, organization of space and time, application to other environments, and evaluation of the learning environment. The next section details elements of positive programming to encourage appropriate behavior. Key elements discussed include caring, communication, cuing, modeling, the use of natural consequences, teaching choice, desensitization/rehearsal strategies, errorless learning, relaxation training, exercise/fitness, and teaching social interaction skills. The last section offers techniques directed at specific behaviors. These include assessing the behavior, analyzing the purpose of the behavior, testing the hypothesis, positively reinforcing desirable behaviors, and decreasing undesirable behaviors while new behaviors are being learned. Briefly noted are the roles of the adults involved in the behavior change process, including parents. (DB)

HELPING PEOPLE WITH AUTISM MANAGE THEIR BEHAVIOR

Fourth Edition

by Nancy Justin Dalrymple

Indiana Resource Center for Autism
Institute for the Study of Developmental Disabilities
The University Affiliated Program of Indiana

A product of the Institute for the Study of

Developmental Disabilities

at

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Bloomington, Indiana 47408-2601

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Printed in the United States of America

This source book is a revision of Educating Autistic/Severely Handicapped Children-Elementary Age, published in 1980 by the Indiana University Developmental Training Center and the source book Helping Children with Autism Manage Their Behavior, published in 1983 as well as the 1987 revision Helping People with Autism Manage Their Behavior.

Much has transpired and been learned in the intervening years about people with autism as they grow up - their needs, aspirations, successes and failures as well as their struggle to live, work, and recreate in settings where they are included participants. Their parents, teachers, and friends are dedicated to helping them live meaningful and productive lives.

Manuscript preparation was done by Donna Buchanan, Sheryl Rader, and Beverly Sturgeon.
Pictures were drawn by Lynn McKnight Jones.
Graphics and layout by Sheryl Rader.

My thanks go to all the children and adults with autism, their families, ISDD staff members, and my family who helped this source book evolve over the years.

The use of the masculine pronoun form is for convenience and brevity and is not intended to be preferential or discriminatory.

Nancy Dalrymple

Dedicated to: Paul

Bruce

Caroline

Chris

Joey

Colin

Tim

Cathy

Jason

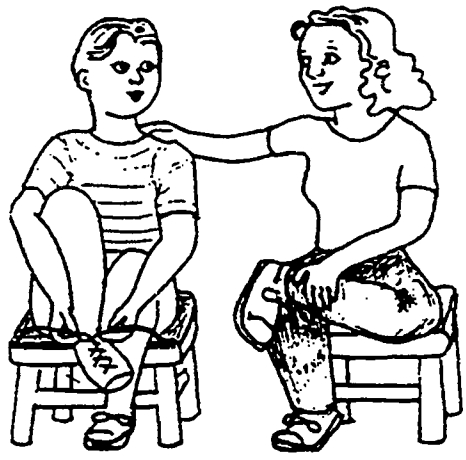
Keith

Kristy

Gordie

Michael

and all they taught us as they struggled to grow up.



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INTRODUCTION

This source book will cover the broad topic of helping people with autism manage their behavior by analyzing the learning environment and the purpose of the behavior, then teaching new skills and behaviors. Accurately assessing the person's current skills and behaviors then setting appropriate expectations are continuous processes in program planning. Long range goals must be established in order to design appropriate and effective programs.

Because most people with autism have severe learning problems, many teaching strategies used with other individuals are not always effective. Much of the reason for the failure of these strategies is the lack of understanding about the combination of perceptual and language deficits paired with the lack of social and relating skills, which most people with autism present.

People with autism are often difficult to teach. They do not learn well from group instruction. They are not flexible and adaptable. They do activities the way they understand, and often need time alone. Reinforcement is sometimes hard to give and difficult to get from people with autism. They are unpredictable and often don't follow the usual social script.

These are some of the reasons why the people who teach and care for people with autism must be trained to understand autism and what having autism means for the education of each individual. People with autism can learn. They need special training so they have the opportunity to become as independent as possible and live in included environments throughout their lives.

This source book emphasizes techniques to help encourage children grow toward independence by learning to take responsibility for their own behavior. People with autism usually require much help in this area. They can and will learn with supportive and informed teacher/parents/peers helping them and with longitudinal programming that is consistent including plans to teach the functional skills they need to live, work, and have fun with others.

PHILOSOPHY

People with autism are individuals first, and only secondarily are they individuals with a developmental disability. They have needs for attention, care, love, and understanding. They have insecurities, fears, and frustrations. They have rights just as everyone does. By making environments accepting of these people's rights and needs, each person's worth and uniqueness is acknowledged. Helping people with autism control their own behavior is the ultimate goal. Adults must provide an atmosphere that preserves and builds self-awareness and self-respect. Individuals then learn that they are liked and cared about. At the same time, clear expectations are established and consistency, both in words and actions, is implemented.

Remember that most people sense when they are liked and accepted and when they are not. Individuals with autism are in a difficult position. They seldom know what to do to be accepted. Their actions often make others angry and rejecting. Striking back at the environment or withdrawing from interactions are ways that people with autism learn to control their world.

When a person hears people talk about him, he can tell by the tone of their voices, their expressions, and body movements whether the conversation relates something good or bad; even if he can't understand all the words. He may be concerned and anxious about why his name is being mentioned or why adults are looking at him. Failure to please adults, failure to learn how to care for himself, failure to get along with peers, failure to know how to accept change in everyday life, and failure at school and work are some of the frustrations a person with autism may face. He seldom has the pleasure of playing or socializing with other children because he doesn't know how. He may retreat into himself or lash out at people or objects in his environment. All adults who

interact with people with autism must make sure that success is attainable. To ensure this, each individual's needs must be known well. At first, environments must be safe and predictable enough for people with autism to feel that they can try. They must learn that they are worthwhile people. They must learn the skills they need in order to succeed. Battles for control must be avoided as the person grows towards independence with the support of knowledgeable adults and peers. This source book will describe ways to implement this philosophy. Confidence grows with each small step toward success.

LONGITUDINAL PROGRAM PLAN

Consistency is something that has been in the literature regarding individuals with autism for a long time. Consistency was usually translated to mean the development of teaching and behavioral strategies that would remain the same across time, environments, and people. Being consistent, even if the learner was not consistent promoted learning and generalization. Knowing that people with autism often became tied to routines, to special cues, and to people necessitated that planning for change and desensitization be built into the teaching strategies. Consistency in teaching does not imply rigidity and control; but rather systematic teaching and dependable environments. Teachers of people with autism must be creative and flexible.

However, as more and more individuals with autism are growing up to become adults in community settings, it is clear that many of them are suffering from having been in an educational setting that did not provide a consistent plan throughout their school years. One reason may be that knowledge about autism and successful strategies for teaching people with autism are recent and were not readily available to many educators. Another reason may be that the disability has been so misunderstood over the years that sometimes the adult with autism has had three or more diagnostic labels. Many school systems still do not report autism on student evaluations or individual program plans. Areas where this longitudinal inconsistency is particularly devastating are in the development of communication, independence, social interaction, and management of behavior.

Some sixteen to twenty year olds have gone through the educational system without developing a means of communication. Since about half of all people with autism do not develop verbal language and even those people with autism who do become verbal need much work with initiating and interacting with language, communication has to be a top priority in every program. Too often educational files for a student show that one year signing was tried, another year attempts to encourage verbalizations received the emphasis, and yet another year a communication board received priority. Speech clinicians changed, teachers changed, and strategies changed. This longitudinal inconsistency is very confusing to the learner and assures that no useful system will be in place as an adult. Educators and parents must work together over time to teach each person with autism to understand the power of communication and how to use various means proficiently.

The same principle applies to learning social skills. Social cues are fleeting and changeable. School skills such as sitting and being quiet, raising your hand, and walking in a line are not social skills. Negotiating, asking for information, complimenting, and sharing are social skills that can be taught. Learning where to focus attention, how to shift attention, and how to organize one's time and belongings may be skills that need to be taught. What to do on a playground, how to ask a friend to go to a show, how to play a board game, participate at a sport facility, or be part of an interest group will probably be beneficial as life-long skills if teaching begins early and builds year by year in a systematic way.

CREATING A PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING

Certain guidelines for teaching recur throughout materials and textbooks written about people with autism. These include: structure, routine, predictability, organization, and consistency. It is often easiest to implement these guidelines for people with autism in self-contained classrooms and programs. However, it is possible and preferable to provide an appropriate program in other settings if teachers understand the student's needs and learning style and are willing to make accommodations to provide for these. As people with autism become able to understand change, learn from models, and acquire communication skills, they can more readily benefit from being in the mainstream of school and community experiences. Ideally, a student with autism should be educated in a typical school environment where s/he has the opportunity to benefit from peer interaction and group instruction with support. Secondary school age students and adults should be given the opportunity to participate in community work experiences and supported work programs. The needs of any given learner will vary from month to month. The methods used to meet their special needs will have to be innovative and creative and will require a team approach. Although their needs vary, most people with autism can learn and interact in settings with their peers. The adaptation of environments is the focus of this section.

Objectives for Creating a Learning Environment

1. Create a structured, ordered environment which is inviting and helps provide the basis for building success and trust.

Attention must be given to the establishment of the learning environment for people with autism. Find out the person's special needs before bringing that person into a setting and create adaptations to meet those needs. Place materials in the same place for easy access, keep everything repaired and working, place some items out-of-reach, and plan for individuals who run or bang their heads to promote a smoothly operating program. Too much clutter and stimulation are difficult for people with autism. Many people with autism become frustrated quickly and may move rapidly; thus, they need an environment which is planned and organized. Such efforts to organize the environment and the orderliness of the materials will be worth all of the time it takes.

2. Create an environment which accommodates individual needs and provides areas for one-to-one interaction and various small group instruction.

Design an inviting classroom, home, or workspace that is age-appropriate and also has work areas designed for maximum attending behavior. There may need to be some work areas at tables, at desks, in quiet corners, or on rugs. Cupboards and cabinets can be used as dividers. At least one table can comfortably accommodate a group and if an informal area is used it should be large enough for everyone to gather with enough space. Many people with autism need to have space around them and should not have to sit too closely to peers. They often pay attention better at tables or when sitting in chairs. Some prefer soft seats or need something to carry around. At times, some may need a rocking chair, exercise bike, small trampoline or other special object.

3. Create an environment where clear expectations regarding use of space, materials and time can be communicated.

Although people with autism may be stimulated by blowing heaters, loose cords, lights, shadows, mirrors, doors, running water, or objects that spin, there is no reason to try to remove all of these from the environment. They can be minimized and avoided by careful housekeeping and use of space. The establishment of areas for play, for break time, for group activities, and for work, as well as areas that are out-of-bounds help individuals learn what is expected of them. Define informal space with rugs or other materials so the person better understands where s/he is to be. Use touch or visual to help track when moving from place to place.

Materials used by the learner should be placed on accessible shelves, in bins, boxes, and labeled or organized by use, lesson, or name. Items which the learner is encouraged to ask for should be in sight, but out of reach. Pictures or pictures and words can be beside the worker to encourage communication. Materials used by the instructor must be less accessible to the learner by being kept in closed cupboards and on higher shelves.

Use visual supports such as schedule boards, chore boards, and routine charts to let the person know the order of activities. The place and the people who will be doing the activity with the individual provide information and should remain as stable as possible. If changes do occur use the visual support to explain the change.

4. Create an environment which encourages self-regulation and independence.

Consistency and predictability permit the person to learn his routine and help him move through it with less and less assistance. Each person's pace must be recognized and considered. Some people with autism are moving ahead of the rest of the group while others must contemplate and check everything out before moving. Making independence in all performance a realistic goal mandates that the learning environment be designed to encourage that independence. Therefore, hooks must be accessible so that coats can be hung up, chairs must be close by for sitting so that boots can be put on, lockers must be organized, and designated places for personal items identified. Visual supports in the form of pictures, written messages, or special objects help provide the reminders and cues for predictability and independence.

5. Create an environment which will encourage staff to work together as a team and be supportive of one another.

Working with people with autism on a daily basis can be an exhausting and frustrating experience unless there is a supportive team. Little successes need to be shared, and concerns need to be discussed. Communication lessons with a speech clinician are best conducted in the classroom or community, so that other staff can observe the interactions and activities. The speech clinician also has the opportunity to make the lessons compatible and functional with other skills being taught. Seeing learners at lunch, at the grocery store, or at the Y-Center provides valuable insights into how they use communication and how they perceive their world. Parents, administrative staff, and all personnel who come into contact with the learners need to be able to implement current program plans.

Organization of Space

People with autism need adequate space. Areas for one-to-one instruction, spaces to be alone, areas for play, areas for relaxation, room for group activities, and provision for various other curriculum centers are needed. Dividers within the room are useful. If the person with autism is going to be with ten or twelve or more people at a time, he will need help to know where he can "escape" if needed and how to get himself out of tight spots.

Expecting young children with autism to sit for long periods is unrealistic. Expecting other people with autism to sit for extended periods without adequate breaks and planned exercise can be disastrous. Some programs have individual desks or tables assigned to each person and have space enough to permit movement and variety. Teaching a learner to go sit in an assigned place may be an effective way to avoid confusion. Individuals can effectively learn where they are to be during each segment of the day and can more clearly understand what they are to be doing if it occurs in a place different from the previous activity. Visual schedules help people with autism know and remember the sequence of activities.

It is wise to plan the environment as carefully as possible. If changes in the environments must be made, involve the learners in the change rather than surprising them. They will adapt much better. The following questions regarding space should be answered for each person with autism:

* Can he sit at a table? What size? For how long?
* Can he sit with others within arms length?
* Where does the teacher need to be in relation to the learner?
* Does he do better when others model the activity? Should they be across from him or beside him?
* Does he do better sharing an activity where he does one part?
* How much noise can he tolerate? What kinds?
* Is the lighting and temperature optimum?
* Do shadows or sunlight distract him?
* Can he move from one space to the other independently?
* Can he move outside the room with a group or does he need one-to-one attention?
* Does he run away?
* Does he eat non-edibles?
* Does he put small items in registers or other holes?
* Does he self-stimulate with mirrors, heaters, puzzles, etc.?
* Does he stop up sinks or toilets?
* Do special alterations such as screens over registers, removal of toilet paper, or soldered plates on drains need to be made?
* Does he grab and/or get into things?
* Does he need something on which to rock or recline at times?
* Does the teacher need to put long hair up or avoid dangling earrings or necklaces, or wear solid colors to avoid distraction?
* Does he react to loud, sudden noises?
* Does he work well with headphones?
* Does he react to open spaces, crowded areas, lots of movements?

Decide what area will house supplies not used by the learners. Keep those in enclosed cupboards or on top of cupboards. Some areas that are "out-of-bounds" to the learners need to be marked in a way they understand. Materials used independently should be accessible, but in assigned spaces.

Individual boxes of materials encourage independence.

Centers for independent use may be at a desk or table with audio-visual equipment, typewriter, computer, and manipulative materials. These need to be organized so that when the person has been taught to work the equipment, he may independently choose or use during an assigned time or during free or choice time.

Bathrooms and sinks are most useful for young children if they are adjacent to the room. Many people with autism do not ask to use the bathroom and therefore need easy accessibility. A sink in the room is helpful to make washing hands, cup, or paintbrushes or brushing teeth become independent activities. However, learners should also be taught to use public restrooms and to indicate the need to use the bathroom. Make sure that the person learns the behaviors that others his age demonstrate in the same setting.

The provision of a space to go to be alone helps some people with autism cope with demands and people better throughout the day. An area where a person can go to get himself more in control and to relax is often needed. To help the person who is self-injurious, rug areas and soft seats can be provided and sharp, hard corners or rough edges on tables avoided.

Sitting at an attached desk and chair is impossible for some individuals because the chair can't be slid back at will. For other people, an attached chair helps them stay in place. Where the learner sits in relation to the teacher must be considered. When much assistance is required, the teacher may be on the dominant side and in a position where he/she can easily move behind the student. Being at an angle to the learner works well for some activities whereas sitting across from him at his eye level is optimum for others. Placement of the workers body in relation to objects and distractions in the environment must be planned also. In groups, seating can be arranged to take advantage of helpful peers and learning from peers.

Materials and areas to engage in rocking, spinning, jumping, and exercising should be available. When the person is working, these behaviors are not acceptable, but they can be done at specified times, and in specific places. Gradually the need for the self-stimulating activity will decrease, but during high stress or regressions it may return. Replacement age-appropriate activities should be taught and shaped.

Organization of Time

Community

The same principles apply to community settings. Choosing when and where to go out to eat, matching work environments with the strengths and preferences of the individual and teaching people with autism the skills and behaviors they need to be successful in each environment are vital components.

Assume the need to preplan, rehearse, and desensitize new experiences and activities. This will help to ensure initial success if the person is anxious about new situations and transitions. Teach how to order at the fast food restaurant at less crowded times, teach how to go through a cafeteria line when the lines are short, consider ways to teach use of bank machines or telephones using visual cue cards, and remember desensitization procedures when getting hair cuts or visiting the dentist.

If beads, mirrors, loud noise, or lots of movement are confusing, avoid these until success and enjoyment in going places is established. Sometimes extra reinforcement must be built into activities in the community to help make them less stressful.

For Staff

There are no perfect answers to staff time allocations. Often lunch hours are short or non-existent for teachers and assistants because of the need to teach during lunch and recess and to do reports and charting. Often support staff or mainstreaming teachers are not readily available; group home and supported work staff have varying shifts. To have a successful program, the staff must also find time to meet together. Negotiations should be made for staff time. Ask such questions as: If the speech clinician is assigned one hour per week per student, how might this be arranged for maximum effectiveness? How can learners be taught to use "free time" or "independent time" to advantage so that they do not rely on adult cues and learn to act independently?

The classroom teacher, group home manager, or program social worker usually becomes the case manager. This involves prime responsibility for implementing the IEP/IPP/IHP, collecting and analyzing data and coordinating the entire program. Sending logs to staff and parents and chairing staffings to discuss procedures and interventions may be part of this job.

If data and information are current, interdisciplinary staffings can be highly efficient times. Setting an hour a week aside for this activity will usually keep each person's program updated. These interdisciplinary groups may have to meet more often during the early implementation of a new program, and less often as the program begins to run smoothly. Regularly scheduled staffings help to identify what is working and provides the opportunity to intervene early and avoid more serious crises when situations change and break down. Learning from each other is valuable to staff members even if individual problems are not being discussed. However, unless short staffings are scheduled regularly, the consistency and predictability can fall apart. Undesirable behaviors may become more frequent or progress may be minimal. Staff may become antagonistic and frustrated.

Volunteers, college students, peer tutors, parents and/or grandparents may be helpful to a program. They must be well trained and kept current on each person's program. To be most helpful they need to be involved on a consistent basis. Inconsistency in staff hours makes consistency in programming that much more difficult. However, the consistent staff in the program must then take responsibility for positive program implementation.

Everyone who teaches individuals with autism must be organized, optimistic, patient, open, flexible, and have a sense of humor. They must be willing to keep data, adjust to meet learners' needs and always work to have the person succeed and trust his world. This involves commitment to plan, innovate, observe, create, enjoy, chart, analyze, discuss and teach. Teachers, parents, and others need to become advocates who are willing to work with the environment and system for the benefit of the person.

For Learners

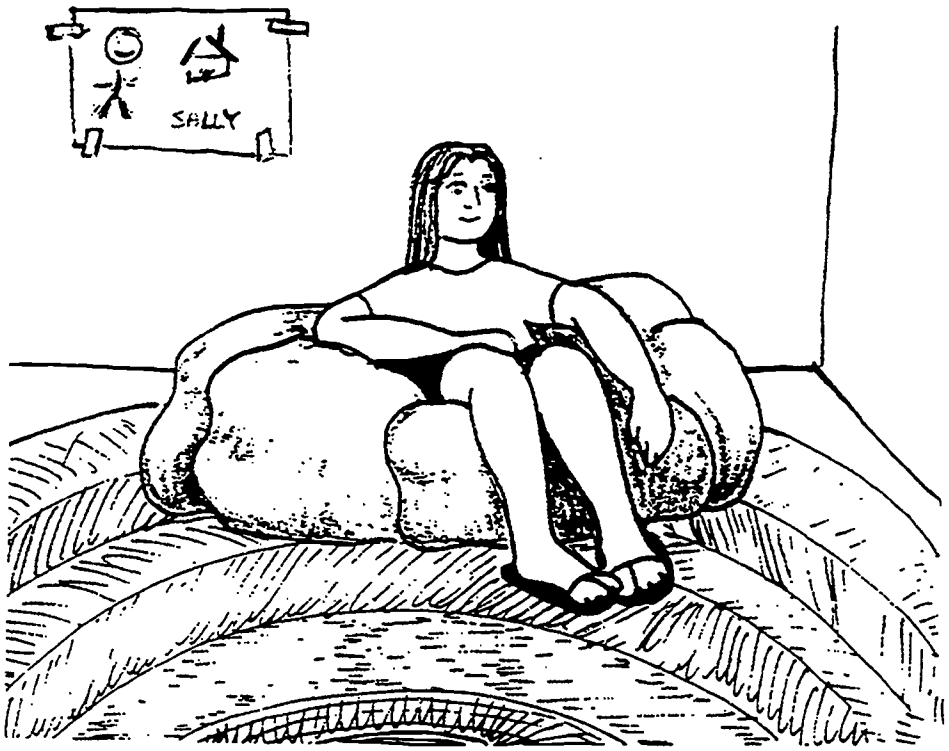
Since people with autism do not adjust to changes easily, the staff should work out a schedule that seems most likely to fit each learner's needs. Background information, observations, the case conference and parents are good sources. After the initial assessment period some adjustments may be needed, but it is best to design a plan and stay with it long enough for the learner to understand the schedule. The following questions regarding the use of time need to be answered for each individual:

* How long can he attend in groups?
* How long can he attend to specific activities?
* How long can he work independently? On which activities?
* How long can he sit?
* How much does he need to move, jump, twirl or exercise?
* How different does his program need to be to accommodate his needs?
* Are 10 or 20 minute activities best in some areas?
* Are activities that are sequenced or repetitive better?
* What activities does he do well alone and for how long?
* Is he productive (rate and accuracy) when working independently? What will help him?
* How does his schedule need to be presented to him? Pictures or written words that can be displayed all at once or one at a time? Do they need to be removable, or able to be crossed off or exchangeable?
* Does he understand sequence, passage of time, time and calendar concepts?
* Does he need to learn by doing and in the natural setting?
* Does he model/imitate? What? Who? When?

Data may be collected in a variety of ways. It must be logged, compiled and shared with others.

The IEP/IPP/IHP should become a working document after its development. Task analyses for some activities will need to be written or short term objectives leading to the IEP/IPP/IHP objectives may have to be designed. Strategies to reach each objective must be planned and constantly updated. These objectives should be divided among the various activities in the person's day so that almost all IEP/IPP/IHP's objectives can be worked on each day. The program plans must be strategically placed so that they are accessible and utilized. It is most functional to have activity-based IEP/IPP/IHP's that embed communication and social objectives into the activities.

Some forms for collection of data can be designed for use with all learners and some will need to be specific for each learner. These forms must reflect the information needed to show progress towards IEP/IPP/IHP objectives and goals as well as behavior targeted for decrease or increase. There also will need to be medication, seizure and activity level forms. These should be tabulated and charted periodically. Parents can keep similar charts at home and be included in analysis.



Having a quiet place to relax at times makes it easier to work.

Summarizing Information

When information has been collected it should be summarized and/or charted in some fashion and used for future planning. Physicians, parents, and other professionals can better utilize information that is compiled in an organized manner. If learner change data is to be used for program planning and decision making, it is essential to keep it up-to-date. Data must be kept on an on-going basis to permit adjustments. Collecting data at the end of the year is not useful to daily programming. People with autism are not consistent; therefore, daily data will produce better information. Studying the data over time may point out trends, possible hypotheses, and certainly produces a better total picture.

Application to Other Environments

Total School/Work Environment

Because the learner must acclimate to the entire school/work environment, this environment must also be made as predictable and consistent as possible; but there is much that is also beyond anyone's control. Plans change. However, all of these uncontrollable factors should be viewed as learning experiences. Explanations through pictures, stories, and simple words help. Adults who always provide reliable, direct information, and remain calm are trusted in time. Sometimes the only thing for the learner to rely on in the cafeteria line when the lunch is late or a tray is spilt, is a person he has learned to trust. In time he will learn to handle these situations with more independence.

School/work rules may have to bend a little because of a learner's inability to handle everything (e.g., waiting ten minutes or walking in a line). Learners can and should participate in as much of

the school activities as possible, even if they don't have all the necessary skills. They will learn best by participating or at least partially participating and succeeding.

The teacher should acquaint the staff, peers and co-workers with the objectives for each person with autism that pertain to his participation in the total program. S/he will become the advocate and trainer of others. When a total staff is working together to meet the goals of the person with autism, he is much more likely to succeed.

Community Environments

People with autism need to learn to function in natural community environments. Choose environments that are predictable, less crowded and less stimulating in the beginning. Choose environments where family and friends are likely to go and practice going often and at scheduled times. Provide preparation for the individual and make the trips short, rewarding and successful.

Work

Work in the community also must match the strengths and needs of the individual. Clear expectations and good job coaching will help build the bridges to advocates. These advocates must understand the need for visual supports to explain the job and changes, for organized environments, and for meaningful social interaction.

Home Environments

Home environments can be made predictable and structured without sacrificing the family's lifestyle. Safe play/leisure areas, places where a person can be by himself, out-of-bounds areas, and activity areas can be established. A person should know that he sits at the table to eat, sleeps in his bed, washes in the bathroom, hangs his coat in the closet, stays out of his sister's room, climbs and runs only outside and does not go in his sibling's room alone. A set home routine helps everyone know what is expected and when events happen, just as the school routine does. Visual home schedules are useful to provide reminders and information. Since most families today seldom have two days in a row that look the same, clear visual information and reminders become even more important in helping the person with autism be able to predict future activities and expectations.

Evaluation of the Learning Environment

Informal evaluation takes place daily through observation and discussion. Videotapes help provide a mechanism for everyone to analyze the same activity at the same time. It is wise to devise some questions to ask periodically which may provide some ideas to consider about needed changes. Some of those might be:

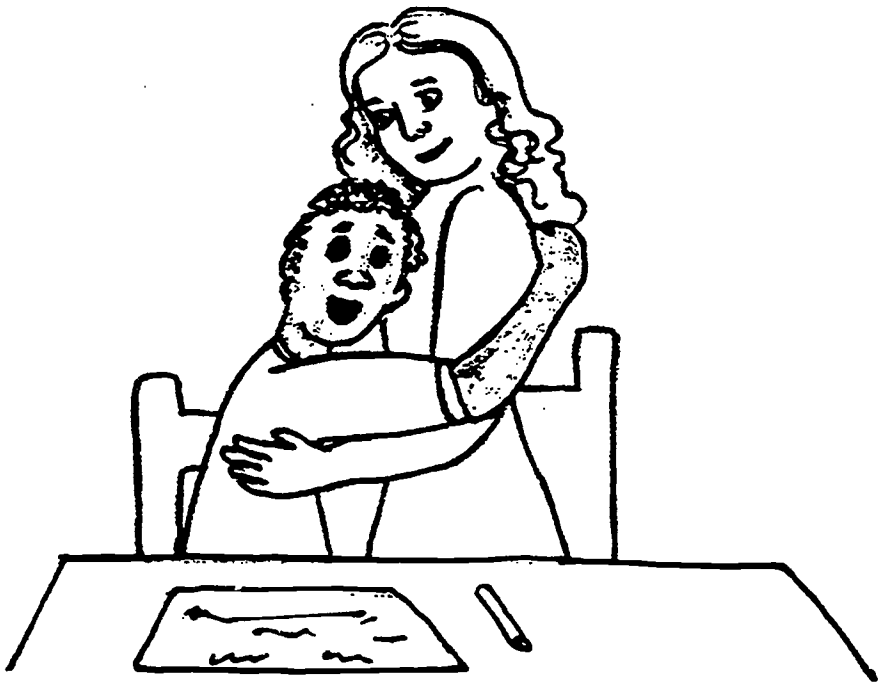
* Is independence being encouraged to the optimum?
* Is staff time being used efficiently and are staff working together?
* Is the environment able to accommodate individual needs?
* Are visual supports in place?
* Does the environment permit flexible programming?
* Can certain problem areas be studied and environmental alterations be made to promote more success?
* Are community sites being utilized effectively for individual learning?

POSITIVE PROGRAMMING TO ENCOURAGE APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

The following discussion covers general techniques that service providers and parents can use when teaching and nurturing all people. People with autism require special attention to these techniques. Their needs are often so demanding and confusing that parents, teachers and caregivers need continual review and reinforcement to remain positive and supportive.

Caring

In order to teach individuals, adults must be concerned about and care for each one. Individuals who have developmental disabilities are dependent in many ways, yet they need to learn to gain independence and self-respect. Much of their success depends on how others in their environment relate to them. As parents, teachers, aides, or volunteers working with people with autism, it is imperative to respect and care for each one. General attitude affects the whole learning atmosphere. For instance, there may be a person you find impossible to teach in a positive manner. Your actions will tell that individual how you feel about him. It is best to assess your feelings honestly and try to affect a change in your attitude. If you are not successful, it may be necessary to admit that you are not the one to teach him. A negative attitude and lack of caring can do much damage to a person in a short time.



A surprise hug shows he is happy or excited.

A simple technique, but one often overlooked in working with people with autism, is the necessity to provide what the person needs. This means knowing each individual well enough to know when needs vary. Some may need a time and place to be alone. If demands are constantly being made, the frustration may become intolerable. One individual may need to occasionally rock, cool off with a magazine, or listen to music; another may need to pace, go up and down the slide countless times, or ride his bike alone. Some may need to chew, bite or spin at times. Providing

age-appropriate outlets for these activities can help to decrease them during structured times. Activity levels, attention spans, interests, emotions, and abilities all vary widely. Efforts to accommodate for individual needs must be made.

Communicating with People with Autism

Communication problems are central to autism. Therefore, special care must be taken to know what each person understands and how to best give messages.

Our messages to people are conveyed through tone of voice, gestures, body language, and choice of words. It's important to create a relationship through which everyone can feel respected. Consider using visual means to convey information whenever possible. Visual information is more concrete and enduring.

The following general techniques are helpful:

1. Be as positive as possible. Praise often and honestly. Notice the good things. Ignore things that don't matter. Many individuals are conditioned to react negatively to "no" or "don't". These words may only trigger a signal that someone is mad or something is wrong but give no information about how to correct it. Use these words sparingly and only when you must have immediate compliance. Be specific when praising."You did a good job. You washed your hands," is better than "You are a good boy."

2. Teach individuals to listen. Many repetitions of directions teach people not to listen to the words and thus should be avoided. Instead, follow a set procedure such as: "Wayne, come to the table" accompanied by a picture and/or gesture. Wait and give time for processing and moving. Repeat using the picture and/or gesture either with or without the verbal, "Wayne, come to the table." If he does not come, move toward the person and gently assist him to the table. In this way, Wayne will learn to listen and follow directions. If you give a direction, make sure you have the individual's attention and that it is followed. Learners learn that they do not need to comply when adults do not consistently require them to do what is asked, after it is determined that they clearly understand.

3. Know what you want the person to do. Be very clear in your own mind what you want learners to do and why. Be sure you are making a reasonable request and one which they are capable of doing.

    a. Example: "We will go to lunch when you show me you are ready," is too vague. "Ready" must be defined. "Shut the computer off," then we will go to lunch," gives more information.

    b. Example: "Dust all the furniture," tells the person what to do, but does not set any standard for quality. Instead picture each piece of furniture

in order and use a light spray to indicate space. Now you have made the expectations clear.

4. Give adequate information. Tell learners in advance what is going to happen next. If there are changes, inform them and involve them with plans. Let the learners know what will happen and what behavior is expected. Use language, pictures, and gestures they understand. Daily schedule boards and sequenced routines made with velcro or check-off sheets and picture wallets are concrete ways to provide information.

5. Use language that is as simple, clear, and concise as possible. People with autism usually can only comprehend a limited amount of language directed at them. It is best to be concise. Loading too many directions and explanations creates frustration and confusion. Individuals can be taught to listen and follow two and three step directions if the language is kept specific and concise. Usually they need individual direction rather than group directions.
    a. Example: "Pick up your paints, wash your hands, and go to music."

Some people may not be able to follow all of this and may give up or become confused. When several steps are required, break the directions up to allow the receiver to complete one step before a second direction is given.

b. Example:
* "It is time for music. Put the paints in the box."
* When the person is finished, say "Wash your hands".
* Then, "Go sit on the rug for music."

Often refraining from verbal cuing helps build independence. Use gestures and objects to provide information. Draw attention to others who can be modeled. Some of this information could be provided by sequenced pictures.

6. Tell the learners what to do and avoid telling them what not to do, whenever this is practical.

    a. Example: Person throws food on the floor. Say, "Pick it up and put it in the sink." (The two-part direction may need to be broken up into two one-part directions.) "Don't throw food," only tells him what he just did.

    b. Example: Person finds some food on the floor and picks it up with the intention of eating it. Say, "Put it is the trash can, " or offer your outstretched hand and say, "Give it to me." "Don't put that in your mouth," probably will invite just that action.

    c. Example: Person grabs an object from another person. Say, "Ask Jennifer if you can see her magazine," or "Give the bell back to Gary." Avoid, "You must not grab the magazine."

These statements give information that will help learners know what behavior is acceptable. The negative statements only tell them what is unacceptable and do not provide needed information to learn what to do differently and more appropriately.

7. Be as neutral as possible when giving directions. The tone of voice, a facial expression, or the difference of a word can change the meaning of a question, direction, or statement. When giving a direction, state what needs to be done and avoid challenges. Individuals tend to become defensive or upset and try to avoid or do the opposite of what is asked when directions are given in a threatening manner.

    a. Example: Say, "It's time to go to the library." Avoid, "You must go to the library right now."

    b. Example: Asking the questions, "Where are you supposed to be?" or "What are you supposed to be doing?" can help the person correct his behavior if said in a neutral tone. However, an entirely different message can be conveyed by the tone of voice. Sometimes students become dependent on these verbal cues instead of self-initiating.

Although many individuals with autism cannot answer questions, they can learn set questions as a cue to stop and think, then return to a place or activity on their own.

8. Avoid asking question with a choice unless the person really has a choice. Directions are given to be followed or to provide information. Do not ask a person if he wants to do something unless you are prepared to accept "no". Clear statements provide information needed to carry out the request. Pictures may be substituted for words, especially in helping the person know sequential happenings. Gestures to objects and environmental cues are sometimes better than words.

    a. Example: Say, "Jim, come to the P.E. room" or "Jim, P.E." - point to picture. Avoid, "Are you ready for P.E.?"

    b. Example: Say, "Come to the table for dinner", or point to picture of table or tap the table. Avoid, "Let come to the table, O.K.?"

    c. Example: Say, "Write your name on the top of the paper." or provide an example. Avoid, "Can you write your name on the top of the paper?"

9. Teach people to respond immediately to learned words, phrases, gestures, environmental cues or questions. These help set expectations and permit the person to function more appropriately in a variety of settings. They may also serve as safety devices. Occasionally the person may have been conditioned

negatively to a word, so another word will have to be found to convey the meaning. Use concrete cues and words.

Examples: "Wait", or a "Out-of-bounds", "Stop", "Find something to do", "What do you do next?" or a fire alarm, an object to use while waiting, an "Out-of-bounds" sign such as 

10. Label feelings. Individuals with autism have great difficulty recognizing feelings of others and expressing their own feelings. Labeling expressions of feeling in natural situations helps them gain information if accompanied by the reason for the feeling.

    a. Example: "I'm mad. You broke my necklace." "I'm happy. "You shared your popcorn with me."

    b. Example: "You are mad that you have to come in." "Going swimming makes you happy." "John hit you, it makes you sad."

11. Avoid labeling people. Usually people know when they have done something "bad". Criticizing or attaching negative labels to people only reduces their self-esteem and self-confidence. Statements that clearly define the expectation, but do not attack the self-image help people gain a positive picture of themselves.

    Examples: "Go change your pants," is better than, "You are a mess." "Keep your hands to yourself," is better than, "You are a bad boy. you hit Sally." You are using the moment to teach.

12. Avoid reprimands. Use set rules that are consistent and neutral. Reprimands are for the benefit of the adult, not the learner. They have little meaning to most individuals with autism and will not change behavior.

    Example: Avoid saying, "You know better than that," or "I've told you not to go in the street a hundred times." Use: "The rule is, ride bikes on the sidewalk."

13. Avoid threats. Threats are negative ways to give consequences. They often provide a negative response.

    a. Example: Say, "Get your money. Then we'll go to McDonalds". Avoid saying, "If you don't get your money, then you can't go to McDonalds."

    b. Example: Say, "Be quiet, then we'll go to recess." Avoid saying, "If you aren't quiet, you'll miss recess."

    c. Example: "If you throw the block at Jim again, you may not play

with the toys any more." This statement is vague and, therefore may act as a challenge and probably cannot be enforced. What does throwing the block mean? What does the person need to learn about playing or cleaning up?

Cuing

To teach a person to remember to act at a specific time, arrange for him to receive a cue before the action is expected rather than after he has performed incorrectly. Cues should be given when needed to help the person gain more independence, but not rely on others.

They may be physical prompts, gestures, pictures, written words, environmental cues such as an object or clock face, or verbal cues that are learned over time, then gradually faded out. Cues are especially useful to people who have problems applying rules, skills, or behaviors across settings.

People with autism sometimes receive more cues than they need, or may need more than they get. It is best to set up a few cues that a person can learn well until he is ready to try on his own. Pictures and environmental cues are the least intrusive and increase independence. Plan for a reduction of cues that rely on the presence of teachers must be in place to prevent dependence.

Examples of Cues:

1. Environmental cues - Lunch box is set out on counter, meaning time to pack lunch. Towel is laid out or pointed to, meaning time to dry your hands.

2. Learned gestures - palm facing out, fingers to lips, lights out. Since people with autism often don't understand gestures, these must be taught in a systematic way.

3. Visual schedules - pictures and/or written sequences that provide information about what is going to happen and provide a way to show changes. These can be velcroed strips, a wallet or book, or a ring; but need to be personalized.

4. Learned words/phrases - time for lunch, get your coat, go outside, your turn, wait.

5. Gradual fade out - Scott interrupted everyone and could not understand that he should wait. His voice became louder until he was noticed.

    * When Scott first approached, he was cued with, "Scott I'm talking. "I'll talk with you in a minute. Wait." (finger to mouth, then flat palm to Scott, Scott should have his turn in 60 seconds or less).
    * Next, "Scott, I'm talking. Wait". (finger to mouth and flat palm)
    * Next, "Wait, Scott". (finger to mouth and flat palm)
    * Next, the gesture to mouth and flat palm to Scott.
    * As Scott approached, the flat palm went towards Scott, and a smile given in recognition. Scott was always praised for waiting.

Modeling

Appropriate behavior models sometimes provide the most impressive components for teaching appropriate behavior. Models can be either adults or peers. Sometimes teachers may need to recruit

peers from other classes or environments to be models for short periods of time. Individuals with autism who do not tune in to others will need to be taught to observe and be prompted to perform as others are doing. The peer models will need instruction and support to learn techniques to keep the attention of the person with autism and encourage responses.

Example of Modeling using peer models:

Judy can't wait more than 30 seconds. She has difficulties sequencing, following directions, and handling confusion. In order to structure the learning experience in the lunchroom to increase waiting, picking up utensils, sitting with peers, eating, and returning the tray, have capable peers with Judy as she is learning, and teach these peers to appropriately cue and reinforce Judy's appropriate behavior.

Natural Consequence

A natural consequence is an action that logically follows an inappropriate behavior. Students learn that their behavior controls the consequence. The consequence must be immediate and meaningful. It also must be within the abilities of the student. When something happens that has a natural consequence, the adult should remain neutral and only interpret what the learner needs to do.

Examples of Use of Natural Consequence:

1. Person spills milk. The person is directed to get a towel and wipe it up. When the task is completed, he is given more milk if he wants it.

2. Person splashes water over the floor when washing hands. The person is directed to find the mop or towel and clean it up.

3. Person breaks up crayons. Crayons are removed for a period of time. Models of how to use crayons are provided.

4. Person misuses record player. Record player is put away for a specific period of time. Models of how to use a record player are provided. Pictured/ written instructions are added.

5. Person climbs out the window. The window is safely locked. Teach the person a way to communicate wanting to leave, to exercise, or whatever the purpose of climbing out the window might be.

6. Person rides the bike in the mud after being directed to keep it on the sidewalk. The person may not understand boundaries. Teach boundaries and reward staying in them. Wash off bike and start again.

7. Person removes glasses by putting fingers on the glass. Teach the person to wipe off the glasses, put them back on and remove them by the sides. Provide a specific place for the glasses to be put.
   NOTE: Most people with autism need desensitization to new glasses.

Sometimes people with autism are reinforced by engaging in the natural consequence. Wiping and mopping or getting attention and help may be so reinforcing that more milk or water are spilled. In these cases natural consequences alone may not help and reinforcement for keeping water and milk where it belongs combined with sensory stimulation activities with liquids may be part of the program. Perhaps analyzing whether the person has a way to say, "I'm done," may help you know what to teach.

These general techniques apply to most people with autism. Each person with autism requires care, thought, and consistency in how the techniques are used and constant evaluation and assessment of the effectiveness of program strategies. The next section discusses positive program strategies that need to be individually designed and implemented for each individual.

Teaching Choice

Making choices is an important part of becoming independent. Young children begin to make choices very early by indicating refusal and meaning it, by demonstrating preferences for people, food, and toys. Many people who have disabilities, including many people with autism, have not had the opportunity to exercise choice-making in a step by step progression. Refusal is often not permitted. Very often the individual doesn't clearly understand how to refuse or accept in a way others understand.

Examples:

Q: "Do you want a drink?"
A: "Do you want a drink?" (The echoed response indicates an inability to answer or is the answer).

Q: "Do you want to ride your bike?"
A: Person goes to get on the bike. (The person may have thought this was a direction and did not understand it as a choice, or the action may have been the answer).

Q: "Are you ready to take your bath?"
A: "No". (Person is made to take a bath now anyway, since this wasn't meant to be a choice).

Q: "Let's clip your nails, okay?"
A: Whining and pulling hand back. (This is a type of refusal to a possible question).

Teaching a Yes/No Response: Much practice will be needed with models and the ability to carry through with the response. Many people with autism respond with "Yes" to everything. This could be from lack of understanding that they really have a choice, a learned response to any question, or a general desire to comply. Perhaps saying or indicating "No" has resulted in negative consequences; perhaps "No" has been a loaded word for them and they would rather not use it except when they feel very strongly.

Reinforcing a "No" response and permitting "No" responses are vital to teaching appropriate ways to refuse. In order to become a decision maker and an independent person, refusal must be allowed and acknowledged.

Example:

"Do you want milk?" Person says "No" or pushes it away when presented with the glass. Sign and say "Good" and say, "You told me 'No', while modeling the sign for "not" or "no". Shaking head "no" is okay, but harder to physically shape and harder perceptually to do. Yes and no shakes are very similar to a person with perceptual/motor problems. If it is vital that the person have milk rather than a substitute, then a reinforcement plan for drinking milk will need to be designed.

Adults often don't like to give the "control" of refusal to people who have developmental disabilities. Comments such as, "But he can't say 'No'" or "There is nothing for him to say 'No' about", indicate the desire of adults to be in control. Acknowledgment of appropriate ways to refuse helps a person grow. As the learning takes place, phrases like, "You said 'No' (acknowledgment), but it's not a choice," or "You said 'No', we'll do it in five minutes," acknowledges the refusal intent. Adults must take care not to use these techniques to take control over a person's life and must permit complete refusal on some objects and issues.

Teaching people with autism that they have the right to make choices and that choice sometimes means the right to refuse is a process that takes place over time. Once the power of choice making is understood and the chance to exercise choice over much of one's life is provided, there is less reason to refuse. Sometimes the person needs more information or experience with the activity or object.

Choice Between Objects:

Present two items - foods are usually a good place to start. It is clearer if one item is clearly a favorite and one is not. Say, "Choose one." If the nonpreferred item is chosen and it is clear that it is not wanted, say and model, "Tell me "No".

Present choices often; at snack, meals, free time, dressing. Help the person, reinforce for choosing, and reinforce carrying through with the choice. Use objects, change positions of choice, pair objects with pictures, then add three items and more.

Choice in Response to Question:

"What do you want?", "Tell me", or "Show me", then offering objects, pictures, or words are ways to teach a cue for indicating choice. The number of items to choose from can increase as the person can scan and understands the power behind making choices.

Making choices in natural settings such as in a convenience store, at an ice cream counter, or at a pop machine can be overwhelming. Narrowing the choice to the number the student can handle (two or three at first), rehearsing ahead of time, then taking a picture or written form of the planned choice along usually helps. At an ice cream topping counter, it may be necessary to physically block off a certain number. The person may also need to learn to indicate choice by a global point rather than always taking the chosen item.

Choice Between Activities:

In order to make an informed choice, a person with autism must experience the activity, object or person. So often rejection comes from lack of knowledge and the preference to stick with the familiar. Teaching people to be successful at a variety of age-appropriate activities is vital to their growth and independence. Only when they know what canoeing is from experience can they choose to do that, choose something else, or choose to refuse the activity. Planning an evening or part of a weekend, being spontaneous and able to change plans, being asked out and deciding whether to go are all part of decision making and choice.

Presenting choices in the visual mode may be required for a very long time. These can be objects, pictures or written words. The person can reach, point, or circle. The medium of choice making can accompany the person as a reminder and cue.

Desensitization/Rehearsal Strategies

People with autism seldom like something that they don't know and will often refuse to go to places or to do new things. When they are exposed to new activities, people, or objects they may exhibit behavior problems. One way to help them become more at ease is to develop desensitization plans to acquaint them with the situation. Desensitization also works with situations that a person fears or has become sensitized to through previous experiences.

Rehearsal strategies are ways of practicing a procedure many times in increasing time elements before participating in the actual event. Rehearsal can include following sequenced pictures with a pleasant reinforcement picture at the end.

Example: Health Procedures:

1. The actual instruments can be introduced and used correctly with the person on several occasions for doctor or dentists visits school or at home. A close resemblance to the actual situations should be practiced. For instance an EEG exam should require lying down, clips in hair, smelly ingredient, and hair blower.

2. Pictures could be taken or drawn of the actual procedure and the sequence rehearsed with the student. The ending picture could be going to a fast food restaurant or going for ice cream as the reinforcer.

3. Desensitization should also include visits to the office or hospital, if possible, in succeedingly longer time periods, even practicing lying down and waiting.

Example: Accompanying an adult to the grocery store:

Places with much stimulation are often very difficult for individuals with autism. The length of time required in the setting may also be an issue. Begin with short visits, maybe even staying outside the first time. Use pictures or words and sequences to describe what is going to happen. Stepping inside and looking for 2 minutes can be pictured. Always try to leave before anxiety becomes acute. Plan to buy a favorite item the next time. Then sequence the plan to buy several items next. Make sure to explain what the plan and expectation is for the day. Sometimes going to a store can mean always having to buy the favorite item and parents are forced into buying more and more of the item to satisfy the person. Therefore, it might be wise to plan a reinforcement away from the store from the beginning, or to vary the reinforcement.

Example: Recreational outings:

So many times people expect that individuals with autism will or should like to go to movies, out to eat, or on a picnic and are rather surprised to find out how difficult these experiences can be. The same rehearsal and desensitization strategies must be used for these experiences as well. Remember also to have concrete ways to demonstrate to the individual with autism how long the experience will be. Use timers and sequenced pictures of activities and then emphasize the last step before leaving to make the completion of the activity understandable to persons with autism. They often rely on external stimuli in the environment to signal completion and these may be misleading. Confusion about completion, coupled with the trouble most individuals have waiting are potentials for problems. These can be diverted if careful plans are made ahead of time.

Errorless Learning

Errorless learning is a technique used to avoid having the person make mistakes as s/he learns new tasks. This avoids learning the activity in the wrong way and it ensures that the person will succeed. The environment, visual supports, prompts, and reinforcement all support errorless learning.

Example: Setting the table:

Each step is visually sequenced. Finding each item, placing one at a time, carrying the total number needed, or carrying a group and returning those not needed can be strategies used to teach. Cues such as place mats at each place setting or the chairs at each place are used as environmental cues. Graduated physical guidance is given, if needed, to prevent any mistake from being made. As the person learns each step, the physical cues are faded and the learner begins to use the picture sequence independently.

Relaxation Training

The learner is taught a specific technique for relaxing through practice several times a day. The technique must be tailored for the specific person, but for most will include deep breathing or blowing out, if the person cannot understand breathing in, tensing and relaxing body parts, deep pressure, and stretching. Teach the person to do the routine to specific cues, either environmental or verbal. Sometimes a certain music tape or counting is enough.

Example of relaxation training:

For one person this may mean sitting in a comfortable chair, bending over at the waist and swinging her arms back and forth while blowing out three times. She then puts her arms on her waist and repeats the maneuvers. She screams when she is upset and lashes out sometimes. This maneuver helps her control both of these behaviors. She needs a lot of rehearsing to be able to do this when she is upset. A reinforcer is given upon completion of the relaxation routine.

Exercise/Fitness

There is increasing evidence that participating in a regular exercise/fitness program helps channel activity and helps the person with autism concentrate better. Serotonin levels also may decrease, making it clear that the body is affected by the exercise. Therefore, a regular exercise program should be incorporated as part of a positive behavioral support program. Many people

with autism will not want to participate or will stop the exercise if they feel their heart rate increasing. Therefore, it will be necessary to plan positive programming techniques to put an exercise program into effect. Most people with autism will do best at individual sports rather than team sports. Teaching skills that can be used as part of a fitness program as an adult and that are accessible should be targeted. These might include swimming, particularly learning to swim laps; jogging, using inside tracks and concrete ways to demonstrate the number to be completed; exercise bikes; step routines on stairs or equipment; treadmills and trampolines, if these are closely monitored; aerobics; and bike riding.

Teaching Social Interaction Skills

Social interaction skills must be taught to people with autism throughout their lives. Some social skills must be targeted and specific objectives and strategies designed for implementation. The failure to teach social interaction leaves people with autism with a major part of their disability, social impairment, forgotten. Many attempts to interact look like inappropriate behavior. Attempts to interpret the social cues of others often result in confusion. A person with autism is usually not able to learn appropriate social interactions without specific teaching. The failure to teach social interaction skills greatly increases the risk of the individual with autism being isolated, rejected and depressed.

Some social behaviors that students with autism need help to learn and apply in everyday situations include:

Waiting: waiting for the bus to come, waiting for dinner, waiting for someone else to answer, waiting for events to occur or group activities to start, waiting for help with a problem.

Taking Turns at Being First: Being first in line, being first to answer.

Transitions Before Completing Something: Completion of a computer game or art activity, completion of a workbook page, clearing the table, putting everything away, straightening chairs.

Negotiating: Where to go to eat?, what kind of pizza to buy?, what TV show to watch?, when to do an activity?

Changing Topics: Talking about favorite topics endlessly, continuously making outrageous statements; repeating feelings of remorse or that others do not like him.

Finishing: Finishing dinner or lunch, finishing a work paper, finishing mopping the floor, finishing dressing, finishing watching the movie or baseball game.

Initiating: Approaching others, asking for something, getting into a game, saying hello, leaving the situation if upset.

Being flexible: The dishwasher is broken, we must wash dishes by hand; the swimming pool is closed tonight; the teacher is sick; the car won't start; the blue shirt is in the laundry; Mom insists that everyone follows all the rules, all the time.

Being quiet: Being quiet while working, being quiet while others are talking, being quiet when others are being quiet, talking quietly or in appropriate voice for the occasion.

Modulating Behavior in Exciting Places/Situations: Learning when to stop clapping, learning when to stop yelling or what is appropriate to yell at a sports event, learning when and where to jump or talk loudly.

TECHNIQUES DIRECTED AT SPECIFIC BEHAVIORS

Assessing Behavior

People with autism need to be taught to control many behaviors that most people learn to control on their own as they grow and mature. The goal of teaching young people to be independent as adults applies to all people, but people with autism must have a consistent, planned approach to move toward this independence. The students need to learn to function in natural settings, learn new skills, and become as self-sufficient as possible. They also must learn the social skills they need to interact effectively at home and in their communities. People are really interdependent. There is reciprocal interactions with others. The adult must intervene and help the person manage his behavior until he has learned how to do this successfully himself. This procedure is very much the same as that followed for very young children. However, most adults are frustrated when they have a student with many inappropriate behaviors who is not developing self-control. How can a battle for control be avoided? How can appropriate ways to interact be taught? How can motivation be provided? How can success be assured? How should a beginning plan be initiated?

Assess your attitude about behavior in general

*What behaviors do you like?
*What behaviors are not acceptable?
*What behaviors are you generally neutral about?
*What behaviors depend on the situation?

Example: **Person goes barefoot.**

Depends on whether it is hot or cold
Depends on activities.
Depends on whether shoes and socks are wet.
Depends on how many other inappropriate behaviors he displays.
Depends on where he is.
Depends on what others are doing.

Behaviors that depend on the situation are confusing to people with autism. Most social situations involve rules that depend on the context, e.g., public/private, formal/informal, or strangers/friends. They are not skillful at reading people's minds or faces, or sizing up situations and inconsistent rules. It is best to eliminate most of the variable consequences for a behavior, and always explain an exception carefully, using words the person understands.

FILL IN THE CHART TO ASSESS YOUR VIEW OF BEHAVIORS

Person's Name: _____Assessor's Name:

Behaviors I Like:

Behaviors I never accept:

Behaviors that depend on the situation:

Positive behaviors to increase:	**Possible Purpose(s)**

Interfering Behaviors to decrease:	**Possible Purpose(s)**

Example of an Exception:

One rule states: Everyone wears shoes and socks.
Another rule states: To jump on the trampoline, you must take off your shoes.
When an exception occurs, an explanation is needed.
Exception: If the child's feet are wet from walking in the rain and his shoes need to be dried, an explanation is needed. Explanation: "Your shoes and socks are wet. Take them off. Put these on. (If possible, be prepared for such emergencies.) We'll dry the shoes and socks."

Collecting Data: People with autism must be observed over a period of time in their natural environments to better understand why they behave the way they do. During an informal observation period where notes and logs are kept, all the behaviors exhibited by each student and the interaction to and from the student should be noted. Decide what interfering behaviors are important to change, what behaviors can be ignored, and what behaviors can be accepted for now. Decide which behaviors need to be decreased and which should be increased. Note antecedents to behavior and the environmental stimuli. The function of the behavior must be understood in order to provide an effective alternative. Teaching a new behavior to replace the interfering behavior is the strategy we want to employ. Ask, "What does the person need to learn?"

After collecting concrete information about the person's behavior, techniques for intervening and shaping the designated behaviors can be designed. It is important to continue collecting data as program plans are implemented and to analyze these data regularly.

Analyzing the Purpose of Behavior

When behavior is charted over time, functions can be better understood. All too often people who are nonverbal or minimally verbal have few alternative ways to express refusal for any reason: being tired, being sick, or wanting a break. They also may not understand choice making, may not know how to ask for help or for more of something, and may not understand changes in staff or routines. Therefore, it is imperative that all behavior be studied in context.

When the function of the behavior is understood, a new behavior can be taught to replace the less desirable one.

Example:

Jane is washing her hands. Bob turns off the water. Jane pinches him. The purpose of the pinch appears to be to communicate. Jane needs to learn to tell Bob to "Stop" or "Go away" with some form of communication and Bob needs to be taught to respond. Bob also may need to learn to respect Jane's privacy.

Example:

Jake screams when the car turns a different direction. Jake needs to learn a way to ask where he is going or tell where he wants to go or maybe Jake needed information before he left. Maybe a communication book of pictures could be made. These could be sequenced to tell Jake the order of the stops. Jake also could have pictures to help him communicate.

Example:

Amy unravels her socks when she is not occupied. The purpose of this action could be to fill her time and/or provide sensory input. Therefore, Amy needs to learn more appropriate free time activities that will meet her sensory needs as well. She may also require reinforcement for alternative behaviors.

Example:

Joey goes limp when he is supposed to move from place to place. Is he refusing in this way because he doesn't like the chaos and confusion during transitions, or wants extra attention? Each of these possibilities can be tested out. The purpose of the behavior may be a combination of reasons.

Hypothesis Testing

In order to know what information the person needs, what environmental changes to make, and what new behavior or skill to teach, an accurate on-going assessment must take place. When a possible purpose of the behavior is identified, the hypothesis can be tested before launching a full plan for intervention. In order to test the hypothesis, variables can be changed one at a time. The purpose of hypothesis testing is to make certain that the purpose of the behavior is being addressed.

Example:

Joan pinches, kicks, and hits adults, especially people who direct her. Possible purposes of the behavior have been identified as being angry and mad because she doesn't like the verbal directing, because she has been physically helped and when she hears the verbal she anticipates the physical, because she is refusing to do the work, because she knows she will be removed and this is her way to escape, or because she is tired of sitting and needs a release.

Test 1: Provide visual directions in the form of modeling, pictures, pictures and words, and/or gestures instead of verbal directing. Reduce the verbal directions.

Test 2: Approach her slowly from the front and keep your hands and arms behind your back, thus giving the message that you are not going to use physical restraint. In this way you also are avoiding a startle by coming up from behind.

Test 3: Teach Joan a way to refuse by modeling, giving or tapping a picture, or by a gesture. Offer her another choice or choices.

Test 4: Teach Joan to ask for a break and honor her request every time. Later she can learn that you understand she needs a break, and you can give her information about when the break will occur in a form that she understands, e.g. a sequence of her daily schedule shown in pictures and words.

Test 5: Plan activities throughout the day for Joan that help release her energy and do not require as much sitting. These might be exercise in the form of aerobics, jogging around the gym, and/or jumping on a mini-tramp. Joan may also need to be taught a way to calm down after exercising.

The decision can be made to try several of these at once, one, or any combination. It is important to design the plan of action based upon the assessment of the purpose(s) of behavior. Sometimes the choice of the function of a behavior is not correct, and the plan of positive intervention does not address the real purpose. When this occurs, there will likely be little change in the behavior. Sometimes the purpose(s) is correct, but the activity or skill to teach is not correct or the method to teach the new activity is not adequate. On-going assessment of all components of the program must occur.

Too often people believe that the person is engaging in the behavior to gain attention. Much interpretation about the apparent social functions are made based on adults' experiences. The interpretations may label behavior as non-compliant, manipulating, or willful, while the person may in fact be trying to escape, get something, or be reacting to some sensory problems. One must go beyond labels to analyze what the person needs to be taught or what information the person needs. Then, and only then can a positive teaching plan be designed and implemented.

Hypotheses must be formulated in order to discover what to teach the person or how to design adaptations or environmental manipulations that address the function of the behavior. This approach emphasizes **ACTION BEFORE** a behavior occurs, rather than action after a behavior occurs.

Example:

An eight-year old throws tantrums that often start with a chain of behaviors. Danny clenches his fists, grinds his teeth, and tenses his body; then he may start jumping, flapping his hands and arms, and yelling. Next he may drop down, kick, and eventually attempt to aggress by hitting or pinching.

The purpose of the first behaviors are to react to frustration and anxiety. The body is tensed to get ready to react. The reason for the frustration and anxiety must then be explored in order to design an effective plan. In complex situations there may be several hypotheses put forth to discover the reason for the frustration.

It is much easier to teach before any of the behaviors occur, but this is not always possible. If there is a chain of behaviors it is easiest to teach during the first part of the chain. In Danny's case, the reasons for the clenched fists, teeth grinding, and tense body need to be analyzed. Danny needs help at this point. Sometimes learning to go through a relaxation routine helps a person calm down in the face of frustrating stimuli. Sometimes learning to relax and communicate something needs to be taught. There may be times when the individual skips the early part of the chain and goes directly to aggression. It's necessary to analyze why this is occurring. Why is this individual needing to go to this extreme to express wants and needs?

Too often adults only react after the behavior occurs. They believe that the person will learn by the consequence that is given, or believe that not consequating the behavior allows the student to "get away" with it. Sometimes the consequence goes way beyond helping the person learn. Some methods used for consequating behavior may be to remove a favorite activity, send the person away, scold, or physically manipulate the person. None of these methods teaches the person what to do. All of them raise anxiety and frustration.

Being alert to the triggers, the beginning of a chain, and the entire environment and learning sequence allows the adult to design more effective teaching strategies and to discover new skills, behaviors, and activities that need to be taught. The person with autism just does not learn from subtle social cues and often reacts differently to environmental and instructional cues such as bells,

hands raised, standing in line, walking in halls, working quietly, staying in one place, moving from place to place, private property and behaviors, and multiple use of space such as the multi-purpose room for lunch and convocations. Other sociable children learn to apply rules in selective situations and children with autism do not. Rules that change depending on the person in authority are extremely difficult. Rules that change depending on the day or time of day are impossible.

Discover what to teach by hypothesis testing. Then discover how to teach the individual through continued collaboration with all who know that person.

Positively Reinforcing Desirable Behaviors

Ask the following questions about a person with autism. What makes the person want to do an activity? What makes learning rewarding? Why does the person want to work at something for 10 or 15 minutes? Why does he want to dress himself? Why does he want to go to the Y-Center? Why does he want to get up in the morning?

Educators often try to make the behavior of individuals conform to "school" or "society" standards all at once. Forgetting that people must be taught appropriate social behavior in small steps, teachers sometimes set the stage for failure. To teach a person to act in a way in which he seldom has behaved, reward successive steps toward the final behavior. Individuals must experience success and receive reinforcement to learn. They must also receive reinforcement to keep performing in desirable ways. They need to experience shared activities rather than constant instruction/direction and correction.

Many people with autism receive little positive reinforcement naturally from people. Educators must look for things each person enjoys and discover what is rewarding for that particular individual. The reinforcement plan must be personalized.

Tangible rewards combined with praise and recognition are often most successful in teaching new behavior. Rewards may include food, such as candy, raisins, apple, or cereal; gum; listening to music; playing the piano; playing with a favorite object; doing an activity that is self-stimulating like spinning lids or twirling strings; stickers on papers; being with a favorite person; or being left alone. A drink of juice, a hair blower, a flashlight, or a private conversation might be effective. Reinforcers may have to be changed periodically and may need to be designed for each particular activity. Knowing the preferences of each learner is a necessity.

Token systems can be established for learners who can wait for primary rewards and who can understand this degree of abstraction. The learners are rewarded with a token to be traded in later for a reward. The tokens can be checks on a paper, chips put into a bag or box, or any other convenient item that can be tallied. The rewards to be "bought" may be tangibles or privileges. Choice of reinforcers is always necessary once choice is understood.

Praise and success should be built into every reinforcement system. Eventually these rewards may replace the other forms of reinforcement. Recognition, smiles, or hugs may be enough to modify or maintain a behavior. However, people with autism can't always understand and cannot always handle recognition and attention in a positive way. When using this type of attention, remember that it may not always be reinforcing. Success, accomplishment, and enjoyment of the activity may eventually become reinforcing. Increasing the number and variety of activities and experiences that become reinforcing is the ultimate goal.

When individuals are first learning to behave in a prescribed way, reinforcement will have to be immediate and frequent. They must learn to pair the behavior with the reward. Once the behavior is learned, the reward can be given intermittently rather than every time the behavior

occurs. Taking the reward away while it is still needed may be viewed as punishment. Something pleasant is being withdrawn and the desirable behavior probably will not be maintained.

Some individuals can learn to wait for reinforcement after they have learned to connect their performance with the reward. Raisins may be placed in a cup to be eaten later. Chips may be traded in daily or even weekly. The amount of delay and the ability to pair the reinforcement with the behavior depends considerably on the maturity and functioning ability of the person.

What behavior is being reinforced? State precisely what the appropriate behavior looks like. Is it completion of a particular task? Is it an attempt to do the task? Is it sitting at the table? Do hands need to be on the table and feet on the floor, too? The criteria must be very clear in order to have the learner understand and modify a particular behavior. Doing interesting, functional, meaningful activities and sharing experiences rather than being directed can greatly enhance motivation.

Example of Clear Criteria:

Behavior to reinforce: Sitting in the chair for a ten minute story.
Criteria: Student must have his bottom on the chair and feet hanging down. Disregard feet swinging, arms and head moving. He must sit the whole time. If he has not been able to sit for 10 minutes the time for reinforcement must be reduced so success can occur.

Examples of Reinforcement:

1. Activity - Clearing tables - Designate number to be cleared using pictures or visual symbols.
   - On the first and second day reinforce every time a table is cleared, with or without help, using token paired with praise. On the third, fourth, and fifth day, if progress is being made reinforce every time the student clears a table successfully alone.
   - If the student is succeeding, move to independent reinforcement with a token, by placing a token on each table to be cleared ahead of time. If the student is not succeeding, reassess the activity and methods.
   - Tokens are then traded for money each day to be used in the snack shop.
   - Give all tokens for completion of entire activity if the worker doesn't need a cue to know which tables to clear.
   - If the worker is not succeeding, reassess the task and methods.
   - Teach the worker to do the task independently. This will include a gradual reduction of the presence of the adult. It can include a system of self-reinforcement such as taking a token or giving a check for each table or checking out and collecting money.
   - If at any point the worker doesn't perform the activity, evaluate the situation and decide if there should be a change in reinforcement, the reinforcement schedule, the activity, the environment, or the teaching procedures.
   -
2. Activity - Come to activities on first request
   - Jimmy will receive a check mark for coming to or going to on the first request. (This is to be for transitions only, not during lessons). Provide Jimmy with a written daily schedule at his desk. Say:

     "Jimmy, it's time for your reading lesson." (information)

     "Come to the round table." (direction)
   - You must be close enough to him to be sure he hears. You might provide him with a visual or environmental cue.

- Walk toward the table or area of instruction.
- If he comes and sits down, give him a check on a file card and say, "Good coming on time" or something similar, so he will know exactly why he is receiving the reward.
- If he does not come, reassess the reasons why. Has he been able to get ready, complete activities, etc.?
- Jim can receive approximately 12-15 checks a day for following directions:

  Come to P.E.
  Come in from recess and go to home room (must put bike away and hang up coat)
  Come to reading lesson
  Come get ready for lunch (go to bathroom and wash hands)
  Come to library
  Come sit at the table
  Go to speech
  Come to music
  Come to story
  Come brush your teeth
  Time to _____
  Come to math
  Go to the store
  Come to snack

- The checks may be traded for:

  Extra bike ride at 1:30 - 3 checks
  Crackers - 1 check each
  More juice - 1 check
  Prizes-varied number of checks

- Jimmy can choose a prize from the box each day at noon. Show Jimmy the prize box and make a chart explaining the other rewards. Help him through the trading-in until he learns that the checks "buy" rewards. The card with checks should stay in his pocket when not in use. Checks should not be used as threats or bribes. It is unwise to say, "If you come on first call you get your check", or "Do you want your check? Then, come". We are trying to teach Jimmy to be responsible for his behavior, not to act because we are bribing him.

Rewarding Other Behavior

Rewarding behavior that is incompatible with the undesired behavior is another way to use reinforcement. This behavior may be opposite to or just different from the undesired behavior. It might occur during the same time as that behavior would occur or at other times. The more desirable behavior may distract the student from the undesired behavior.

Examples:

1. Julie runs away whenever she is on the large playground. For several days, give Julie one-to-one attention from a responsible peer, who if possible, will play with Julie on the swing, slide, or sandbox. An adult should be close by

to reinforce Julie and the peer with appropriate rewards. Julie cannot run and be rewarded for playing. Playing is incompatible with running.

2. Linda spins lids whenever she has the opportunity. During each lesson of 15 minute duration, ask Linda to place the lids in a specific location. When the lesson is finished, Linda may have her lids for five minutes. Spinning lids is incompatible with doing lessons, yet acts as a powerful reinforcer. Linda is permitted control of the situation by being allowed to put the lids down and get them herself. Rewarding working without lids will likely increase this behavior.

3. Reward Jamie for eating with his spoon. Start with something he likes a lot, maybe ice cream. He cannot be rewarded for eating with his fingers, since this is incompatible. Nothing more needs to be done about eating ice cream with fingers. It should decrease as eating with the spoon increases.

4. Reward self-initiation by always permitting the self-initiated act or shaping it to something safe. Self-initiation is incompatible with no initiation.

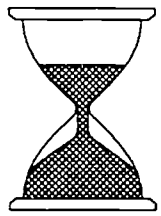
Contracts

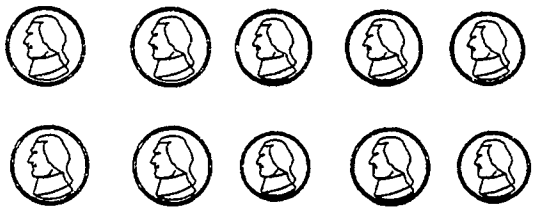
People with autism often do best when rules are very specific and concrete. Written or pictured contracts that are designed in a positive way by rewarding attempts, and small steps and not penalizing for mistakes often work well. Sometimes students with autism become very upset when their papers are corrected or when they fail to reach a goal. Their desire for perfection on concrete, specific tasks makes them anxious about mistakes.

The same principal applies to removal of privileges. Loss of recess, dessert, or going to grandma's may not be teaching anything to the student since time relationships are not intact and anxiety overtakes the ability to understand. Sequence of events is thrown off and the ability to generalize and apply information to learning how to avoid such a dilemma is not available.

Positive contracts can help the person with autism know exactly what to work on and how to succeed.

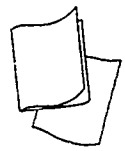
Walk to music
Sit for 10 minutes
Walk back to room



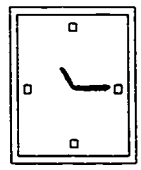


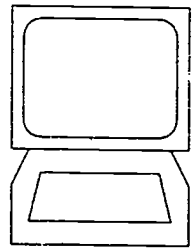
Nickels can be given intermittently for staying on task or at the work station, or can be connected to amounts of work.

Choose 2 papers.



Finish before 11:15. =





Computer time/then lunch.

All of these have success built into them. The attention is given to what behavior the person is to do rather than what the person does wrong. This positive focus will help shape and strengthen the desired behaviors and provides the person with needed concrete information about what s/he is doing right.

Contingencies

A contingency is a situation in which a person does something that is reinforcing to him after he has completed something else.

When adults set contingencies, they must always carry through with them. Do not set up rules that cannot be followed. Do not set contingencies that depend on one certain situation.

Stating a contingency provides information. If a student is screaming because he wants a popsicle, saying, "Point to (picture of popsicle) popsicle," tells him how to succeed. If a child is dawdling over getting his shoes and socks on, a reminder, "Put your shoes on, then you may go outside," can give him an incentive or help him remember what he is doing. A sequence of pictures often helps the learner understand the concept.

Contingencies should always be stated positively and clearly. "Do this _____, then you may do this _____," or, "When you do _____, then you may _____," are positive ways of stating contingencies. Trust is built though the consistency of always doing what you say. Always follow through and allow the person to do the reinforcing activity when he has completed the first task, even if he forgets about it.

Example of Contingency:

"Brush your teeth, then take out trash." The person brushed his teeth, then went to watch TV. Remind him by saying, "You brushed your teeth, now you may take out the trash." (It is not unusual for people with autism to like to do routine tasks like taking out trash. Doing these tasks are often strong reinforcers.)

If contingencies are worded negatively, a different message is transmitted. A statement such as, "If you don't drink your juice, you won't get your cookie," becomes a threat. Avoid such commands as "No going to McDonald's unless you finish your work." The student hears the "No" and may never hear the rest.

Contingencies can be set up ahead of time with the student, or they may be learned as part of the routine.

Examples:

"Hang up your coat, then go into the classroom."
"Eat your breakfast, then go to work."
"Button your coat, then go out."
"Earn five dollars, then go shopping."

When these are understood and learned, the student may test the rules now and then to be sure they still apply. When the contingency stands, he simply does not get the reinforcing activity until the first is done. Sometimes in the teaching stages it is necessary to help the learner through the first part to permit him to learn that you mean to do as you say. Even later, there are times everyone needs help.

You may have to restructure the day in order to use contingencies to create the best learning situation. Be sure there are activities the learner likes throughout the day. Make sure the activity you plan for the learner to do once she has completed the required activity is reinforcing for her, or give her a choice. Help her participate.

Examples:

"Finish your work, then get a drink."
"Drink all your juice, then get a cookie."
"Clean up the blocks, then watch TV."
"Finish your work, then go to recess."
"Put on your coat, then go outside."
"Take a bite of fish stick, then have some chocolate milk."
"When you sit down, we'll play the record."
"Play with the playdough, then have your puzzles."
"Wash the dishes, then listen to the radio."
"Work quietly for 10 minutes, then we'll have talk time."

Interventions for Decreasing Behaviors While New Behaviors Are Being Learned

Ignoral

When inappropriate behaviors occur, ask the following questions about the attention being given to these behaviors:

Can conditions be arranged so that behavior is not rewarded? Can the behavior be ignored? Does it really matter if it continues? Will the behavior diminish or become extinguished if it is ignored or does the person need to be taught something new by reshaping the behavior?

In order to answer these questions, determine if it is safe to ignore the behavior and whether the behavior can be completely ignored. Then record data while ignoring the targeted behavior.

The behavior may increase in frequency initially. If it can be completely ignored, it should decrease significantly when attention to the behavior has been a reinforcer. Reinforcing appropriate behavior as described in the previous section must accompany the ignoral. The tendency is to ignore appropriate behavior and pay attention to inappropriate behavior.

Examples of Ignoral:

1. A person belches loudly and often. Ignore the belching and reinforce other appropriate behavior often. Giving attention and reinforcement to more appropriate behavior in a planned way and ignoring the undesirable behavior can be quite effective.

2. A person is whining. Ignore the whining and reinforce appropriate communication.

When the decision is made to ignore a behavior, it is important that all people in the environment are informed and trained in what ignoral means. If even one person comments, laughs, or disciplines for the behavior targeted for ignoral, the intervention will be less effective. Ignoring without understanding the purpose of the behavior will not work. If the persons needs help, is confused, or seeks approval and the behavior is ignored, it will likely escalate. Teaching a means to communicate and shaping communicative intents are required.

Redirection

Ignoring inappropriate behavior and redirecting the person to some new and reinforcing activity often teaches new ways of responding.

Examples:

1. Four year old Jamie grabs Laura's glasses. Say nothing about this behavior, but redirect Jamie by putting a ball in his hands and saying, "Throw to Laura." Desensitize him to people wearing glasses.

2. Nicki hits his head with his fist. Ignore this behavior. Redirect Nicki to the jumping horse since you know he likes this activity. Even so, Nicki shouldn't learn to hit his head to get out of activities he doesn't like. He needs to learn

to communicate his wants and needs. Does head hitting indicate that he wants to be finished, that the task is too hard, that he needs help or that he needs more information?

Satiation

Can the behavior be done over and over until it is no longer reinforcing and the person tires of it? This is satiation. When a behavior is not harmful and there is no great need to stop it immediately, satiation may be tried. However, people with autism like ritual and do not satiate easily.

Example:

Five year old Larry will eat only Jello and bananas. Every meal is a battle. Give Larry Jello and bananas until he asks for something else. Make sure other foods are available, others are modeling eating them, and Larry is offered them. Teach him a way to indicate a choice. Desensitize him to foods by presenting a few of the same ones each day.

Restitution or Substitution

Examples:

Substitute an activity that is more functional or helps the person learn to correct or fix the situation.

1. Jim plays in the water fountain at every opportunity. Build cleaning the water fountain and sink area into his schedule several times a day.

2. Mary dumps boxes of toys, crayons, and materials. Designate activities that use picking up and dumping them like trash pick up.

3. Kevin writes on walls. Build cleaning walls into his program plan. Offer him access to writing materials.

Startle

A loud noise or quick movement to gain a person's attention that is followed by a direction.

Example:

Jan. falls to the floor, refuses to move, whines, and fusses. A direction is given, "Jan., get up and walk with me." If she remains on the floor, clap your hands, repeat the direction and extend your hand to help her comply. The clap startles Jan. into attending to you again. Startle effects may be a loud word, whistle, stomp, or a bright light; something that attracts the person's immediate attention and something she would rather avoid. The reason for the refusal must be discovered so more appropriate ways can be taught.

Quick-Sit/Breather

This is a quick 20-30 second sit whenever and wherever the behavior occurs.

Example:
Julie is choosing a swimsuit at a store. She begins to pull suits off the hangers. Direct Julie to "Sit down". Physically assist her if needed. Give no attention while Julie sits, but stay right by her. After 20-30 seconds, when Julie is calm, direct her to "Go to the dressing room" and hand her a suit to try on. (Trying on clothes is often very confusing and she may need to be taught what this is all about.)

Sit-Out/Relax

This technique removes the person from attention and stimuli for a specified period of time. It might be used to keep a behavior from escalating.

Examples:

1. Josh has great difficulty keeping his hands off young children. He often grabs them, drags them, or manipulates them in other ways. When this behavior occurs, Josh is told, "Sit (in this chair) until you calm down. After two or three minutes Josh is directed, "You may go to the lunchroom now." He should be returned to the activity with no comment. If possible, Josh returns by himself. (Remember that Josh will need to be taught how to interact and maybe desensitized to young children.)

2. Kim sometimes loses control (exhibited by giggling, touching everyone, and loud talking). Kim is directed, "Sit and relax". She is taught a relaxation routine at set times during the day. She is permitted to return on her own with no comment except perhaps an acknowledgment that she is there such as, "Here is your book, Kim. We are on this page." Investigate why Kim feels overloaded at times!

   Having a specific chair and place for sit-out relaxation often helps the person know where to go independently. However, the relaxation routine has to be usable in a number of settings without a specific chair.

On-Hand

The individual is on-hand by having to hold onto you or you to him. This technique is sometimes effective when the person is unable to control himself, exhibited by his inability to stay in place and follow directions because of excitement or a high activity level.

Example:
Give the direction, "Chuck, I will help you. You stay with me for awhile." When Chuck relaxes ask, "Are you ready to follow the rules? If he says, "Yes," or demonstrates readiness, release his hand and state the rule or give a direction. If he is not ready, continue holding him. It may be necessary to teach walking beside, waiting, or other specific skills.

Alone Area

This intervention is typically used when a student is out-of-control and is likely to hu.. others or himself. Attention is likely to make the situation worse. The person is removed or goes to a safe area where there are not distractions and where he is safe to help him gain control. When the person is quiet, he is asked to rejoin the group, and nothing further is said. The person should return

whenever possible to the activity that was interrupted. His behavior controls his return. In time, he may learn to return alone. Sometimes it is wise to use a timer to let the person know how long he must stay, and when he may return. Alone time has the potential for misuse and should be carefully monitored to preserve the rights of the person. A high density of reinforcement must be in place so being alone doesn't become reinforcing. Finding out the reason for the out-of-control behavior is essential to building a positive program plan.

A Hold

If a person is out-of-control, a safe hold can be applied by having him sit in front of you, crossing his arms, and holding him from behind. His legs can be held, if necessary, by placing your legs over his. Nothing should be said. When he relaxes, can be helped to do his learned relaxation routine. Other special holds can be learned. Sometimes being able to squeeze between two things like two bean bag chairs or two mattresses helps a person relax.

Loss of Tokens or Privileges

For a person on a reinforcement system, such as checks, tokens, or points, a specified number is subtracted for specific infractions. Privileges are also lost in the same way. The rules must be clearly delineated, made clear to the person, and always be applied consistently. It is important to remember that earning privileges is a more effective learning strategy for facilitating positive behavioral change. Taking away something that has been earned relies on a person's ability to control impulses, think ahead, and understand the relationship of behavior to future events. It is usually punitive and negative and has great potential to escalate problem behaviors.

Who Helps the Person Manage His Behavior?

Adults who work with people with autism must have well planned environments, carefully designed programs, and the ability to be flexible. They must be calm. They must be willing to act as advocates for individuals with autism and help others understand them. Sometimes teachers and parents seem to work in isolation without the needed support of other adults or professionals.

It is best if all school or program personnel plan the positive behavior support program together with parents if possible. All adults must agree on a consistent plan. The person working with an individual with autism should implement the program plan and not have to rely on someone else. When a person is being instructed by a team, all members must be consistent. If a principal or additional staff members must be called to intervene, the primary teacher should remain the director of the intervention and the decision maker. If a person is too strong or violent to be in a certain program at the moment, other arrangements will have to considered until the positive program can be implemented. Alternatives may include an extra teacher or aide, an area to be alone at times, more reinforcement, or help with observation. Sending a person home from school or work for inappropriate behavior seldom decreases behavior. That may be where s/he would rather be at the moment, so s/he is reinforced by going home.

Plans will have to be made for positive behavior strategies when students are out of the classroom, work, or home environments. The teacher needs to assume the role of case manager and keep all the staff members informed. This information must include current program plans and understanding the function of behaviors and the relationship to new skills being taught. Periodic staffings and information should be conducted and disseminated so all staff members and parents are working together as a team. Arrangements with bus drivers, lunchroom personnel, and maintenance people should be considered part of the teacher, team leader, or case manager's responsibility.

Parents must become part of their child's advocacy team. Behavior management techniques should be as compatible with parents' techniques as possible. Parents should be taught new skills when needed. Parents should be invited to staffings and must be part of the educational plan. Teachers need a good support system to do the job well. They may have to build this themselves from both the school system and the community. Parents are essential to this support system.

Foxx suggests that to be successful change agents, adults must be behavioral artists rather than behavioral technologists. To do this one must have a sense of humor; have a concern and genuine liking of people; possess a "perceptive sensitivity", ability to look at small, gradual changes; be optimistic, believe that there is an answer; be persistent; and be self-actualizing. Reinforcement comes from within and what clients do is not taken personally. Being non-controlling could be added to this list. The locus of control should not rest with the adult, but move toward the person with autism accepting responsibility for his own behavior. This will sometimes mean making mistakes and accepting failure and disappointment. If the adult has the attitude that "He will do this because I said so, or I planned it," or "He doesn't need to communicate or need to know where he is going," then issues of control are bound to erupt.

CONCLUSION

This source book has emphasized bringing consistency, order, and structure into the confusing worlds of individuals with autism, while continuously teaching adaptable and flexible behaviors so they will learn to function well in natural settings and participate in their communities. Designing environments and programs to ensure successful learning while still encouraging independent growth and allowing risk taking is not easy. Using positive techniques and reaching agreement on what to teach, how to teach, and what to change is arduous.

Because autism is such a perplexing developmental disability and because people with autism are often inconsistent and so different from each other, opinions on behavioral strategies vary widely. This source book presents a philosophy from which to build a successful program. It has worked well with many people with autism and has been implemented by a large population of adults. These adults were supported in their efforts and were able to discuss the person's gains and regressions as well as their own frustrations and joys. Support and understanding is as important as knowledge to ensure a program that makes progress toward long range goals. Often adults express fear about teaching a person with autism because they aren't sure they'll know what to do. They may feel incompetent as teachers because people with autism are so often different in their responses that they require a great deal of special understanding. Getting to know a person with autism often requires throwing away many preconceived roles and rules. People who are good observers, constant analyzers, problem solvers, and who genuinely like people, will be successful teaching people with autism. The people with autism will be successful learners too.